

# BLACK POLITICAL THEOLOGY

Spring 2010 // Georgia State University // Directed Reading Graduate Course  
Instructor: Vincent Lloyd

## Overview:

There has recently been a groundswell of interest in “political theology” in the humanities. The term comes from the German jurist Carl Schmitt who suggested in his book of that title that “all significant political concepts of the modern theory of the state are secularized theological concepts.” This seminar will examine the significance of that claim for African American religious and political thought through critical engagement with literature, theology, and theory. To what extent are the concepts of African American religious thought, or vernacular expressions of African American religiosity, related to the politics of the “black nation”? Moreover, are there ways that critical reading practices secularize the canon of African American thought, eliding black political theology?

## Draft Reading List:

### Week 1.

- Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*
- Lewis Gordon, “Douglass as an Existentialist”
- J. Kameron Carter, “Race, Religion, and the Contradictions of Identity: A Theological Engagement with Douglass’s 1845 Narrative”

### Week 2.

- Al Raboteau, *Slave Religion: The “Invisible Institution” in the Antebellum South*
- Eddie Glaude, “Agency, Slavery, and African American Christianity”
- J. Kameron Carter, “Historicizing Race: Albert J. Raboteau, Religious History, and the Ambiguities of Blackness”

### Week 3.

- James Weldon Johnson, *God's Trombones*
- Eddie Glaude, *Exodus! Religion, Race, and Nation in Nineteenth-Century Black America*

### Week 4.

- W.E.B. Du Bois, selections from *Du Bois on Religion*
- Howard Thurman, *Jesus and the Disinherited*

### Week 5.

- James Cone, *God of the Oppressed*
- Cornel West, *Prophecy, Deliverance! An Afro-American Revolutionary Christianity*, chapters 3 and 4

**Week 6.**

- Richard Wright, *Black Boy*
- Ralph Ellison, “Richard Wright’s Blues”

**Week 7.**

- James Baldwin, *Go Tell It On the Mountain*
- James Baldwin, “Everybody’s Protest Novel”; “Notes of a Native Son”; “Going to Meet the Man”

**Week 8.**

- Evelyn Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent: The Women’s Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920*
- Karen McCarthy Brown, *Mama Lola*, Introduction and Chapter 4

**Week 9.**

- Dolores Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness*
- Jacquelyn Grant, “Black Theology and the Black Woman”

**Week 10.**

- Audre Lorde, *Zami*
- Audre Lorde, “An Open Letter to Mary Daly”

**Week 11.**

- Octavia Butler, *Parable of the Sower*
- Jerry Phillips, “The Intuition of the Future: Utopia and Catastrophe in Octavia Butler’s *Parable of the Sower*”

**Week 12.**

- Sherman Jackson, *Islam and the Blackamerican*
- Malcolm X, selected speeches

**Week 13.**

- J. Kameron Carter, *Race: A Theological Account*

**Week 14.**

- Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man*
- Beth Eddy, *The Rites of Identity: The Religious Naturalism and Cultural Criticism of Kenneth Burke and Ralph Ellison*, Chapters 5-7